

ALCAÏDE MORAT OF SAFI AND THE FRENCH ENVOY – APRIL 1634

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Captain Antoine Gabiron was appointed as an envoy of Louis XIII, King of France, to the court of the Sultan of Morocco in 1633. His journal of expenditures during this two-year posting includes amounts spent between the 12th and 30th of April 1634 when he traveled from the court of Sultan al-Walid in Marrakech to the port city of Safi. This journal provides us with a glimpse of life at that time and in that place with the currency being the *Livre Tournois* (*Ltz*) which was divided into 20 *sois* (*s*). The *alcaïde* of the town he names as *Morat*. *Alcaïde* is the Spanish form of *ca'id* with the participle *al*, meaning *the* as a prefix. It is known that Jan Jansen van Haarlem held a government position at Safi before the completion of the kasbah at Oualidia in 1634 or 1635 but what the position was is not certain with governor and admiral being options. The holders of both are found addressed as *ca'id*. That Jan was referred to as *Morat Re'is* while in Salé makes it likely that Gabiron's *Morat* and our *Morat Re'is* are one and the same but this not proven.



Before arriving at Safi, Captain Gabiron paid 12 *Ltz* for a sheep and some chickens which were distributed to the soldiers as some or all of their pay. A 'safe passage' document for all travel was necessary to travel with any measure of security. The traveler was under the protection of the issuer and the one he traveled under was presumably issued by Morat. He left Marrakech on the 12th and arrived at Safi on the 23rd during which time he hired porters and an interpreter at a cost of 5 *Ltz*. On the 26th he presented himself to Alcaïde Morat to settle his account. Gabiron paid him:

115 *Ltz* for the safe passage document (paid for *after* the trip);

15 *Ltz* for Morat's soldiers who assisted on the trip;

115 *Ltz* for Morat's lieutenant, his sergeant and three alcaïdes for their assistance;

10 *Ltz* for the *return* provisions;

5 *Ltz* for the Moors who helped with the tents and horses.

He also transported a *piece of Cambrais* sent to Morat by Alcaïde Sayd which cost 50 *Ltz* and an additional 50 *Ltz* to Alcaïde Hemed Agadet for delivering the *cambrais*. Perhaps this was the cloth from the Cambrai area of France now called *cambric*.

He had Morat send 25 *Ltz* to a eunuch and 2 *almichauris* (advisors?) he had hired to keep him informed of what the inner circle of the Sultan was doing. He did not see them before he left Marrakech to pay what he owed and was taking care of it now.

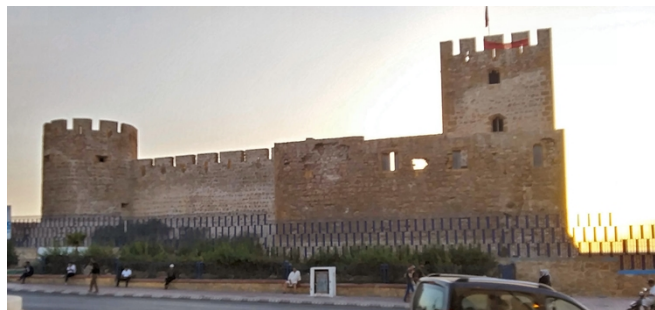
Over the next week Gabiron detailed the following expenditures:

- 10 *Ltz* for the horses in Safi;
- 15 *Ltz* for the porter to go to Marrakech and obtain the pass needed to travel which he received on the 19th;
- 39 *Ltz* was the cost to pay 24 *coubdes* from Rouen to the Alcaïde Abilcherin, governor of Safi, and to Sidi Messabut, the Sultan's agent in Safi. This is puzzling for two reasons: first, *coubdes* translates as *elbows* and the entry mentions a *half coubde* being accepted. Second is the governor of Safi being named as Abilcherin who was someone other than Morat which supports the premise that Jan was the Admiral of the port;
- 32 *Ltz*, 10 *s* was paid to Mr. Guerin for a *quintal* (100 pounds) of biscuit sent by the envoy to the French captives at Oualidia;
- 10 *Ltz* was spent to carry letters from Salé to Safi and from Safi to Marrakech;
- 55 *Ltz* was spent for his own expenses plus his servants and *several other Christians in Safi* for the seventeen days;
- 38 *Ltz*, 15 *s* was the total paid to the security detail he had on land and sea; and for the *negros* from the Sultan's palace; an interpreter, the porters, the seamen and captains to act as the pilots through Safi's harbor; the customs officials; and for *Sidi Messehut* (no details given);
- 25 *Ltz* was spent on their last day in Safi to cover the costs of being accompanied by a ship sailed by Moors; to embark on a corsairing vessel from the harbor (not certain about this translation being correct) and for the provisions of the voyage.

Gabiron also claimed the following two expenses which revealed a bit of his character:

- 5 *Ltz* was given to a young eunuch of Renés in Bretagne who is very needy; and
- 10 *Ltz* was given for other sick eunuchs.

The customs officials as well as Jan had offices in the *ribat* which still stands.



Source: Henry des Castries. Les sources inédites de l'Histoire du Maroc, Première series – Dynastie Saadienne (1530 – 1660) I. *Archives et Bibliothèques di France*. (Paris, 1911) Tome 3, pp. 461 – 470.